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DUONG DINH THAO PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER 121ST PARIS TALKS

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[Memorandum of Duong Dinh Thao's press conference after the 121st session]

[Text] Opening his press conference, Duong Dinh Thao declared: At today's meeting, after the U.S. delegate and the Saigon delegate delivered their speeches, Minister Nguyen Thi Binh made the following impromptu statement:

I have listened carefully to the U.S. delegate's speech today and realize that his speech has not brought any concrete and clear answer to the peace proposal advanced by our side in the seven-point statement which has been further elaborated by my recent statements.

You continue to make use of old arguments to avoid a direct answer to the concrete problems raised by us. Your questions are not aimed at clarifying the problems. Rather, they are aimed at distorting the correct proposals advanced by us and at avoiding the questions which have been clearly posed.

The questions which are being raised and which require a clear answer from the U.S. Government are: First of all, in the seven-point proposal, which points are considered by the U.S. Government as positive and which as unacceptable? After listening to the U.S. delegate's statement, I have the impression that all seven points are considered negative. Is that correct?

Secondly, what will be the day and the month of this year on which the United States will withdraw all U.S. troops and foreign troops of the U.S. camp from South Vietnam in order that, along with this eventuality, the release of all servicemen of all parties and of all civilians captured during the war can be implemented?

Thirdly, is the U.S. Government ready to stop supporting the present warlike Saigon administration headed by Nguyen Van Thieu so as to let the South Vietnamese people settle their own internal affairs?

The United States cannot evade this problem by simply reiterating the common principles. In my opinion, since these questions have been posed for quite some time and the U.S. Government has had plenty of time to study them, I don't see why the U.S. delegate cannot answer these questions at today's meeting? Is it not obvious that the U.S. Government has intentionally postponed a concrete answer to these questions and that it continues to pursue its policy of aggression? I hope that the U.S. Government gives up this policy, and I continue to wait for a concrete answer to the above questions from the U.S. delegate so that the conference can move forward and a correct political solution to the problems can be reached in the near future.

Then, Mr Duong Dinh Thao added:

It is obvious that the U.S. delegate has tried to defer giving an answer to the concrete questions put forth by Minister Nguyen Thi Binh. My friends, you have gone over the statement made by Mr Bruce today and have probably seen that Mr Bruce's questions scarcely touched the seven-point proposal advanced by our side. Am I right?

Later, Duong Dinh Thao answered newsmen's questions:

An unidentified journalist: Could you recall for us the position of your delegation on the need to convene an international conference on the Vietnam problem?

Answer: Concerning this point we have made statements that are very explicit.

To date, the Paris conference has made no progress; and even after we put forward our seven-point peace initiative 2 weeks ago, the U.S. delegate gave no answer. The question that arises is not the form of the conference. The question that arises is that the U.S. Government must renounce its policy of aggression and neocolonialism in South Vietnam. It has not done this and that is why the conference is still deadlocked.

You may recall that in his speech of April 7 last year, Mr Nixon said the following on the problem of troop withdrawal: "If the United States had to declare that it is withdrawing regardless of the nature of enemy activities, this would be tantamount to giving up a major trump in the bargaining for the release of American prisoners. It would be leaving aside the point which incites the enemy the most to negotiate to put an end to the war at the earliest possible moment, and it would supply the enemy command with the very data they need to organize attacks against our remaining forces at the time when they are most vulnerable."

In September 1970, we said that if the United States sets a deadline for withdrawal of all its forces, we will guarantee the security for those withdrawing forces and we will settle the matter of captured U.S. militarymen.

In our seven-point proposal of July 1, we said that if the United States sets a deadline for withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1971 of all the troops of the United States and of the countries in the U.S. camp, the release of the militarymen of all parties and of the civilians captured in the war will be carried out and completed at the same time as withdrawal of all U.S. troops. To date, the U.S. Government has still not answered this question. It is not the form of the conference that prevents the U.S. Government from answering.

Villard (AFP): On the prospect of a conference broadened to all of Indochina and with respect to information from Hong Kong, Mr Whitlam, who has just visited China, said that China has declared that it would be favorable to attending such a conference.

Answer: I learned about this in the press, just like Mr Villard. China has always firmly supported the Vietnamese people's patriotic struggle and always supported our correct position at the Paris conference on Vietnam. Recently, after the PRGRSV advanced its seven-point peace initiative, the PRC warmly supported it.

Bernard Valery (New York DAILY NEWS): The spokesmen of United States and of the Saigon government have said that they have not succeeded in getting a clear picture of your position, specifically, of Point 1. Can you clarify it for us? They say that you tie prisoner release and withdrawal to a number of other points, such as the end of "Vietnamization," dismantling of military bases and so forth.